produced by CIL in Assam during the last three years is as under:

1995-96	8.21 lakh tonnes
1996-97	7.52 lakh tonnes
1997-98	6.87 lakh tonnes

(b) Lack of demand, inadequates rail infrastructure facility, difficult geo-mining, conditions unviable economics of mining have affected enhanced production in North Eastern Coalfields. However, efforts will be made to improve the same in future depending on the leverage allowed by the market forces.

(c) Cement, Paper, tea gardens, power, fertilizer, Steel and Brick Kilns are the main consumers of NEC coal.

Many consumers such as SAIL, Fertilizers and Power Plant have stopped/curtailed offtake of coal from NEC either because of higher landed cost or because of availability of cheaper coal from other sources.

Increasing import duty on Coal

791. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Coal Industry is facing a serious threat from cheaper imported coal from South Africa and Indonesia;

(b) whether Government are contemplating increasing the import duty to enable Coal India Ltd. (CIL) to maintain its market; and

(c) if so, whether the move is designed to protect and encourage inefficiency in the PSU?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In the recently presented Budget the basic duty on coking coal has been retained at 5% whereas the basic duty on non-coking coal has been increased from 10% to 15%. For both varieties of coal a surcharge of 10% has been levied.

(c) Domestic coal faces a much higher incidence of royalty and freight charges as compared to imported coal. The measures, therefore, is to rectify this imbalance. While the pithead price of coal is one of the cheapest in the World, the landed price is high because of the freight and other levies.

Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. funds for Golf Club

792. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has contributed funds for development of Golf Club in the colliery area;

(b) if so, the total amount spent by the company for the purpose;

(c) whether trade unions in the Joint Bipartite Committee in Coal Industry have objected to the expenditure of this nature; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) A sum of Rs. 3.2 lakh has been sanctioned by Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. as contribution to the Brahmani Golf Club of Talcher for purchase of three Golf Sets and Kits.

(c) No objection has been raised by the Joint Bipartite Committee in Coal Industry at the level of Coal India Limited nor by Joint Consultative Committee at the level of Mahanadi Coalfilds Limited.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply given to part (c) above.

Down-trend in underground mining of coal

793. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that production of coal by underground mining has gone